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DE RUEHIL #1811/01 1330922

ZNR UUUUU ZZH

R 120922Z MAY 08

FM AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD

TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 6880

INFO RUEHIC/OIC COLLECTIVE

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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 ISLAMABAD 001811

SENSITIVE

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: PGOV PHUM PK PREL

SUBJECT: OIC ENVOY SADA CUMBER'S VISIT TO PAKISTAN

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¶1. (SBU) Summary. In meetings May 2 with the Minister of Foreign Affairs, the General Coordinator of the Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC) Standing Committee on Scientific and Technological Cooperation (COMSTECH), the Chairman of the Council of Islamic Ideology, journalists, religious leaders and scholars, the U.S. Special Envoy to the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC), Sada Cumber, explained his mandate, briefed the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) outlining U.S. cooperation with the OIC in the areas of science and technology, education, and the advancement of women, and vigorously defended the freedoms of American Muslims to worship and thrive in U.S. society. End summary.

Freedom of Speech

¶2. (SBU) Accompanied by Acting DCM, U.S. Special Envoy to the OIC, Sada Cumber, briefed Minister of Foreign Affairs Shah Mahmood Qureshi and Additional Secretary for the United Nations Desk, Khalid Aziz Babar, on his initiatives to bring better cooperation between the OIC and the U.S. through his appointment. In addition, he presented to Qureshi a memorandum of understanding (MOU) between the U.S. and the OIC, focusing on science and technology, education, and the advancement of women. Both Qureshi and Babar expressed gratitude to the USG for appointing Cumber to this position; however, they noted that the majority of the Pakistan population failed to appreciate the USG insistence in protecting free speech in the face of media (Danish cartoons or the Dutch video) that were seen as insults to Islam. The Envoy said that he too was offended by these "bigoted" attacks on his faith, but the fact remained that this kind of speech should not be punishable just because it offends.

Advancing Science and Technology

¶3. (SBU) The Envoy met with Dr. Atta-ur-Rahman, the Coordinator General of the OIC's Islamabad-based COMSTECH, the OIC standing committee that coordinates science and technology programs among the OIC member countries. Rahman reported that COMSTECH was currently working on 130 projects in 27 member countries, primarily focusing, at this time, on training for science policy officials. Cumber stressed that the COMSTECH projects needed to focus on the grassroots promotion of innovation and promote long-term

commercialization.

¶14. (SBU) Cumber explained that he had briefed his draft MOU to OIC authorities in Jeddah but was frustrated at the lack of interest he received. Enthusiastic about COMSTECH cooperation with the U.S., Rahman suggested that COMSTECH sign the MOU while the entire OIC continued to consider it. Delighted, Cumber asked how quickly COMSTECH could make a decision; Rahman promised to review the draft MOU and respond to Cumber by May 8. Rahman expressed an interest in joint projects be created to benefit the OIC members to include agriculture research and water management. Rahman noted that U.S. funding could also be used to augment national innovation funds, financial commitments made by separate OIC countries for the development of science and technology. The Envoy said that the OIC planned to develop digital libraries in the ten poorest OIC countries in an attempt to assist them economically and was responsive to Rahman's offer to sign the Envoy's MOU with the U.S. on behalf of COMSTECH.

Other Pakistan Engagements

¶15. (SBU) In a meeting with Dr. Khalid Mahsood, the Chairman of the Council of Islamic Ideology (the government entity that examines whether the laws of Pakistan are in accordance with Islamic law), the Envoy explained that the U.S. model of how Muslims interact should be replicated world wide. Cumber noted that unlike the current trend in other parts of the Muslim world, no one ever asks whether a Muslim in the U.S. is a Sunni or Shi'a because it did not matter. Dr. Khalid appreciated the U.S. Muslim model and opined that it should be showcased to a wider audience. He also noted that the Council was currently working on a global model of Muslim

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family law that embraced this ideal of unity. However, Dr. Khalid also pointed out that the perception of the U.S. currently was negative in Pakistan. Cumber also invited Dr. Khalid and the other Council members, who will be traveling to the U.S. in mid-June on an International Visitor Program, to accompany him in a series of briefings to work on better methods of inter-faith dialogue.

¶16. (SBU) At both the roundtable with the journalists and at the inter-faith dinner, the Envoy asked the respective attendees on how the USG could return to the days in the Muslim world, notably Pakistan, where the U.S. could proudly display its name on the services that it has provided without fear of retaliation. Media representatives suggested the U.S. talk to the common man and not just the national and provincial leadership. By discussing the amount of USG resources going into Pakistan, the negative perception will change and the "USA label" can be attached to a project or funding initiative once again. Attendees at the inter-faith dinner described a lack of transparency in where the foreign funding is actually goes is preventing the Pakistan citizenry from fully embracing the U.S. projects. Many people see the money as just going into the pockets of the leadership.

¶17. (SBU) The National Art Gallery was honored to have the Envoy open a new exhibit, entitled "Building Islam in Detroit" which showcased the growing Muslim population in the Michigan city and how the culture has blossomed in the art, music, and architecture produced.

¶18. (U) This message has been cleared by Special Envoy Sada Cumber.

PATTERSON